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Keeping valuables out of sight thwarts thieves

MANNHEIM, Germany –USAREUR personnel can easily become victims of car break-ins. Satellite navigation devices, laptops, ID cards, gas cards, passports and military clothing are some of the items regularly stolen from cars and vans.

“The main problem is that property is left out in plain view inside military and civilian vehicles,” said Lt. Col. Lon Walker, chief of law enforcement at the USAREUR Office of the Provost Marshal. Another is that some people who are new to Europe just won’t lock their vehicles.

“It is not only important to lock your vehicle when it is unattended but also the law in some countries in Europe,” Walker added. But a locked vehicle alone is no deterrent, he warned. If thieves see something valuable in plain sight inside, they will gladly smash a window or cut open a canvas top to grab it.

“It is best to never leave anything valuable in a car when it is unattended,” Walker added. “Crooks know all the hiding places for electronic devices.” If you have to leave something in the car, the trunk is the safest place, he continued.

Walker also cited a trick that often targets women driving alone. “Someone indicates there is something wrong on the driver’s side of the vehicle,” he explained. While the driver is distracted, someone else opens the passenger side door or reaches through the open window and steals the purse on the passenger seat.

Walker offered more advice for people who will be driving around Europe this vacation season to reduce their chances of becoming victims of crime:

- ❑ Keep baggage and valuables out of sight, preferably locked in the trunk. If spending the night, take valuables inside with you.
- ❑ If you have a detachable satellite navigation system or radio, always take it out when you leave the car.
- ❑ Always lock your car while driving, while getting gas at rest stops and when it's parked. Locking or securing your car is a requirement in most European countries.

- ❑ Never leave valuable documents such as passports or ID cards in your vehicle – those should always stay in your possession.
- ❑ Maps and guidebooks on the dashboard show that you're a tourist - keep them in the glove box.
- ❑ Keep away from cars driving erratically and never pick up hitchhikers.

Contact your local Provost Marshal Office for more security tips or download National Crime Prevention Council pamphlets on car and vacation security at www.ncpc.org/resources/files/pdf/theft.



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